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9-13-2019

Nothing but the Best: A Guide to Preaching Powerful Sermons

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Recommended Citation

Palmer, Rodney A., "Nothing but the Best: A Guide to Preaching Powerful Sermons" (2019). *Faculty Publications*. 1046.

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Hyveth Williams. *Nothing but the Best: A Guide to Preaching Powerful Sermons*. Bloomington, IN: Xlibris, 2018. 262 pages. \$19.99.

In her timely book, *Nothing but the Best*, Hyveth Williams (homiletics professor at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University), draws on the expertise of homiletical giants such as Richard Lischer, Haddon Robinson, Thomas Long, Leonora Tisdale and others to weave together a theoretical, methodical, and practical guide for great preaching. After documenting her personal philosophy of preaching and lamenting the dearth of great preaching, Williams underscores the all-important point that great preaching is born out of a solid theological foundation for preaching. For her, preaching that is biblical must adhere to three principles: (1) hermeneutics, (2) sound exegesis of the text, congregation, preaching situation and the preacher, and (3) authority. The author climaxes the section with a succinct overview of prophetic preaching and is quick to point out that “prophetic preaching is a form of proclamation distinct from preaching biblical prophecy” (46).

The second part of the book, captioned “Methodology,” discusses the different techniques and principles that should characterize great preaching. In chapter 4, Williams addresses the disconnect that exists between the preachers’ world and that of their listeners. It is admirable that she not only highlights the factors to be blamed for this discrepancy, such as bad hermeneutics and poor rhetorical skills, but also provides some credible solutions. The recommended solutions include sound exegesis, quality time for sermon preparation, employing the Aristotelian styles of rhetoric, and a love for language. Chapter 5 provides a summary of different types of sermons, such as expository, textual, topical narrative, prophetic, Black or African American, biographical, liturgical, redemptive-historical, illuminative, conversational or relational, system-sensitive, deductive, and inductive. Williams also examines different sermon delivery styles and underscores the salient point that “no matter how great the content of a sermon, without clear vocal communication or expression, the delivery will be dismal” (96). She concludes this section of the book with an analysis of the literary genres of the Bible and the best practices to observe when using them in sermons. Her exploration covers the genres of the psalms, parables, epistles and narratives.

In the third part of the book, entitled “Praxis,” Williams laments the “tremendous paradigm shift in worship style and content as music, drama, praise dancing, and video presentations usurped the centrality of preaching” (126). In reestablishing the primacy of preaching in the life of the church, the author advocates that the content of worship should achieve “a biblical balance in which preaching is the lamp to the worshippers’ feet” (134). In chapter 8, Williams tackles the devaluation of the spiritual gifts of women, especially as it relates to the ministry of preaching. One cannot help noticing that rather than spending most of her time recounting the negative treatments meted out to female preachers, she focuses mainly on equipping her fellow women preachers with practical strategies that will greatly enhance their preaching abilities. She summarizes her arguments by calling for a greater spirit of collaboration between preachers of either gender. Chapter 9 reminds preachers that although the cultural shifts and diverse generations warrant a change in the approach to preaching, it is important that preachers remain biblical and relational when preaching to the contemporary mind. In chapter 10, Williams encourage preachers to ensure their sermons cater to the needs of all their congregants and not just a select group. Stories should be incorporated in sermons to connect with children, and technology and mass media should be utilized to convey the gospel to those who are outside the walls of the church. Chapter 11 rounds out this section with its focus on

examples of different sermon illustrations and how to use them effectively to consistently preach nothing but the best (181).

In the final section of this volume, Williams provides her readers with full-length manuscripts of some of the different types of sermons she discusses in the book. The sample sermons include prophetic, expository, textual, and topical styles.

This masterpiece on preaching will prove beneficial to all who desire to improve their preaching prowess. The experienced preacher will be reminded of the best practices of preaching and how to hone their preaching skills. On the other hand, the inexperienced preacher will learn how to avoid the common pitfalls of preaching, and how to prepare and effectively preach biblically sound and practical sermons. Furthermore, Williams' book is a wonderful resource for present and future female preachers.

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